

SUBSIDIZED ADOPTION PROGRAM

Some children placed in out of home care will never be able to return to their birth home. For these children, a permanent relative placement or adoption is the preferred alternative to Another Permanent Planned Living Arrangement (APPLA). Some of these children suffer further from handicapping conditions; others are older or are members of a sibling group. These factors make it more challenging to find adoptive homes for these children. Frequently, these children have special needs such as the need for medical care, counseling, therapy, or special educational services.

The cost of caring for these children can be prohibitive for a potential adoptive family. Before the adoption subsidy program, the only alternative was to leave the children in foster care. Adoption subsidy gives the child the benefit of a permanent family while assisting the family who would otherwise be unable to adopt the child. The CD made changes to the subsidy policy in 2003. Our philosophy is that financial, medical and/or other support services should be available for adopting the special needs children in our care and custody. All of the new adoption subsidy children we serve may receive, but are not limited to, basic maintenance, Medicaid, and daycare services. Adoption subsidy payments may also include special expenses for respite, residential care, or assisting in the purchase of special adaptive equipment for a handicapped child when the equipment is not covered by Medicaid.

Non-recurring adoption expenses are also available to families who adopt special needs children based on the specific needs of the child. These expenses are made on behalf of children in the custody of the CD and other state and private agencies. Reimbursement of non-recurring expenses may be made on behalf of those children adopted independently (who do not qualify for full subsidy), that meets the special needs criteria and whose adoptive families live in Missouri. The non-recurring adoption expense payment is used to compensate families for the legal expenses, adoptive family assessment, pre-finalization placement supervision by the adoption agency, and transportation/lodging and other costs incurred during the adoptive process. Payment is not made until the adoption is final.

In recent years, the vast majority of children placed for adoption by the CD have had special needs. The agency has devoted a large portion of its resources and placed a priority on finding homes for these children. This has enabled the CD to greatly reduce the number of children in long-term foster care who previously had little hope of ever having a permanent home.

As of February 28, 2005, there were 12,841 children receiving adoption subsidies at an average monthly cost of \$325.00 per child. Total expenditures for the adoption subsidy program were \$52,610,316.91 in SFY-03, and \$61,693,507 in SFY-04 and anticipated expenditures of \$ 70,341,912 for SFY-05.